

Message Text

SECRET

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15

ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6972

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

DOD

JCS

CINCPAC

S E C R E T MANILA 12020

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, MARR, RP, US

SUBJECT: MELCHOR'S CALL ON SECDEF

TOKYO FOR SECDEF

REF: A. SEOUL 6651 (NOTAL)

B. STATE 203988 (NOTAL)

1. WHEN ALEX MELCHOR TELEPHONED ME AUGUST 24 TO REQUEST APPOINTMENT WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, HE SAID HE HAD THREE ITEMS TO DISCUSS; (A) REASSURANCE ON CONTINUED U.S. USE OF BASES, (B) DISCUSSION OF HIS CONCEPT FOR "RESTRUCTURING" THE BASES TO COMMERCIAL USE, AND (C) GOP INTEREST IN ACQUIRING MILITARY EQUIPMENT RECOVERED FROM CAMBODIA AND VIET-NAM.

2. I TOLD HIM POINT (C) WAS WELL IN HAND AND SUGGESTED HE NOT RPT NOT IMPORTUNE SECDEF WITH THIS SUBJECT. ALTHOUGH
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I HAD NOT AT THAT TIME RECEIVED INSTRUCTION ON FINAL ALLOCATION

OF EQUIPMENT, I SAW NO VALUE IN HAVING MELCHOR RAISE IT IN SEOUL. HE GRUDGINGLY AGREED TO DROP THIS POINT.

3. I AM THEREFORE LESS THAN AMUSED THAT HE APPARENTLY DECIDED, IN TYPICAL MELCHOR OVERKILL, TO GET AT THE ISSUE OBLIQUELY BY INVOKING ARTICLE III OF THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY. WHILE THIS ARTICLE MERELY CALLS FOR CONSULTATIONS, IT IS CLEARLY INTENDED TO INVOLVE A RATHER FORMAL MECHANISM, SINCE IT SPECIFIES THAT THE PARTIES WILL CONSULT "THOUGH THEIR FOREIGN MINISTERS OR THEIR DEPUTIES." THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH CONSPICUOUSCONSULTATIONS NOT ONLY IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT ALSO IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND IN THE ENTIRE ASEAN EQUATION, ARE ALL NEGATIVE AND TOTALLY UNNECESSARY.

4. I HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED TEXT OF THE "SORT" OF AIDE MEMOIRE, BUT I SAW PRESIDENT MARCOS YESTERDAY AND HAVE SEEN FONSEC ROMULO TWICE IN LAST TWO DAYS, AND NEITHER HAS MENTIONED THIS SUBJECT TO ME. MARCOS POSITION HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN, BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, THAT HE DOES NOT RPT NOT WISH TO INVOLVE U.S. IN MINDANAO MESS. IT WOULD, IN MY JUDGMENT, BE POLITICAL FOLLY ALSO IN PHILIPPINES FOR HIM TO DO THIS. I AM, CONSEQUENTLY, PUZZLED BY THIS APPARENT SUDDEN SHIFT.

5. IT MAY, THEREFORE, BE POSSIBLE THAT AIDE MEMOIRE IS MERELY A "CUTE" MELCHOR MANEUVER TO RAISE SPECTRE OF ARTICLE III CONSULTATIONS IN ORDER TO HASTEN US INTO DECISIONS ON ALLOCATION OF FORMER CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE MILITARY EQUIPMENT. IF THIS IS THE CASE, I THINK WE SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR, IN UNEQUIVOCAL TERMS, THAT WE DO NOT RPT NOT APPRECIATE RESORT TO THIS KIND OF TACTIC AND CONSIDER IT AN INAPPROPRIATE WAY TO CONDUCT BUSINESS BETWEEN FRIENDS AND ALLIES.

6. MY NORMAL INSTINCT, IN SITUATION LIKE THIS, WOULD BE TO MARCH IMMEDIATELY IN TO SECRETARY ROMULO (AS THE "FOREIGN MINISTER" WHO WOULD BE AFFECTED BY ARTICLE III) AND TRY TO GET THIS AIDE-MEMOIRE RETRACTED. HOWEVER, SINCE MELCHOR IS GOING TO BE IN WASHINGTON SOON AND WILL BE
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SEEING HABIB AND ELLSWORTH (REF B), I FEEL I SHOULD TOUCH BASE WITH THE DEPARTMENT FIRST SO THAT YOU AND I ARE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH. THEREFORE, I WILL HOLD ANY ACTION HERE UNTIL I GET DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS.

7. THIS SUBJECT, INCIDENTALLY, MAY GET ENTANGLED WITH ANOTHER ISSUE WHICH I THINK IS ABOUT TO ARISE AND ON WHICH I DO NOT RPT NOT YET HAVE FULL INFORMATION. THIS INVOLVES

THE REPORTED INTEREST OF TWO AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES IN
DRILLING IN SOME CONCESSIONS BEING OFFERED BY THE
PHILIPPINES IN SEABED AREA WEST OF THE PALAWAN CHANNEL
WHICH IS DISPUTED AMONG PHILIPPINES, VIET-NAM AND CHINA.
IF SUCH DRILLING WERE TO TAKE PLACE, ALL THE OLD SPRATLY
PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY WOULD
ARISE AGAIN. UNTIL I CAN GET THE FACTS IN THIS CASE, IT
WILL BE PREMATURE FOR US TO TAKE AN OFFICIAL POSITION.
HOWEVER, YOU MAY WISH TO HAVE IT IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND
WHEN YOU TALK TO MELCHOR AND HE MAY HAVE IT VERY MUCH ON
HIS MIND IN RAISING THE QUESTION OF ARTICLE III
CONSULTATIONS.

8. PLEASE LET ME HAVE YOUR REACTIONS SOONEST. SULLIVAN

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NNN

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